

Biomass BMP Sub-Group Meeting Notes (12/14/09)

Attendees: Angela Farr, David Atkins, Julie Kies, Rob Ethridge, Julia Altemus, John Todd, Joe Kerkvliet, Roger Ziesak, Len Broberg, Martin Twer, Peter Kolb, Meredith Webster, Jason Toddhunter, Paul McKenzie, Todd Morgan, Brian Sugden,

Angela opened meeting suggesting we focus discussion on filling gaps about soils and FWD, noting that CWD guidelines are already well established.

Len Broberg raised a few concerns:

- We don't know what kind of demand there will be on forests for energy in the future. Fear of vacuuming up all duff and debris from forest floor when we hit big energy crisis.
- Will biomass harvesting in the future use the same equipment? What might the impacts of that equipment/techniques be?

Joe Kerkvliet raised questions/concerns:

What is different about biomass harvest vs. sawlog harvest? Equipment used?

Two issues of main concern:

- Soil health: include all microflora and fauna, mycorrhizal relations w/ FWD and CWD
- Wildlife impacts to large and small fauna—i.e. migratory birds, voles, salamanders, etc.
- He is not satisfied with just including soil indicators in guidelines. He wants to see inclusion of wildlife, micro flora/fauna.

Peter Kolb comments/suggestions:

- Include protective and “solution” language in biomass BMPs
- Noted that we need to recognize that soil disturbance is not always bad—can be good for forest health and regeneration in some instances.

Paul McKenzie comments:

- highlighted that the BMPs deal with two soil concerns: compaction and movement. Perhaps we need to add other concerns in language—nutrients, etc.
- need to focus on the activity, not just “biomass removal”

General Discussion:

- Seems to be consensus by the group to be careful not define biomass strictly in the guidelines and to keep it in the realm of “forestry” as a whole.
- Multiple entry is a concern.
- Benefit of BMP review/development process is that it promotes adaptive management and is a fairly easily implemented monitoring program.
- Opportunity to create map/matrix of soil indicators for forests
- Need to create something related to biomass harvesting guidelines for Montana that will 1) pass the “sniff test” by environmental interests and 2) put our own state

guidelines in place in order to avoid being part of anticipated national umbrella guidelines.

- There is concern about striking a balance between creating BMP's that are useful and robust as well as not too onerous.

Roger Ziesak proposed to add supplemental questions to next year's BMP audit that captures data about biomass harvesting. He will develop a list of potential questions and I think, propose them to the group. Sample questions: 1) was biomass harvest part of the project? 2) did it include grinding of slash piles. There seemed to be some concern that those questions/others won't provide useful info.

Julie suggested, based on Rob Ethridge's comments about the audit and education components of BMPs, that the group create some sort of position paper on biomass harvesting guidelines in MT that states we will:

- 1) do light modifications with general language to current BMPs to be more inclusive of concerns beyond water quality
- 2) create a soil health guidelines publication (similar to what there is for wildlife). This may include development of map/matrix of soil indicators as mentioned by Meredith Webster, USFS.
- 3) commit to developing/implementing a forest management curriculum for public/private education, BMP workshops, maybe SFI certification, etc. that addresses concerns about FWD, soil, wildlife, etc. that are raised in biomass harvesting.

Tasks assigned:

1) Angela will email a Word version of BMPs to all members. Those interested would review line by line, identify gaps and opps to include language related to biomass harvest concerns—soil, nutrients, wildlife, micro flora/fauna, multiple re-entry, etc. Tracked changes/comments will be submitted to Angela for compilation.

2) Angela will work with Meredith to explore idea of creating soil indicators

3) Roger will develop supplemental questions for next years BMP field reviews